

WORKERS WORLD

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50¢

Bosses, gov't behind auto crisis *Why should workers have to pay?*

By Martha Grevatt

"Absolutely we are prepared to walk. There is no doubt in my mind."

Those aren't the words of a union leader preparing for a strike. No, they come from a capitalist bully—Fiat CEO Sergio Marchionne—threatening to pull out of a planned alliance with Chrysler. Speaking of the United Auto Workers and the Canadian Auto Workers, Marchionne, the likely CEO of a reorganized Chrysler, said, "No one wants to remove the UAW or the CAW from the table. But it will happen if a bankruptcy process drags on." (Detroit News, April 15)

The White House's Auto Task Force has declared that Chrysler is "not viable" as a stand-alone company. If Fiat and Chrysler do not consummate the alliance by April 30, there will be no more government aid from the U.S. or Canada, forcing Chrysler into bankruptcy.

Aid is also contingent on Chrysler eliminating most of its \$6.9 billion in secured debt, a majority of which is owed to JPMorgan Chase, Morgan Stanley, Goldman Sachs and Citigroup. These Wall Street powerhouses have received \$95 billion in U.S. bailout funds but have denied government requests that they reduce Chrysler's debt.

The U.S. and Canadian governments are insisting that the auto unions "make painful sacrifices." Up against this powerful array of forces—their bosses, the government and the big banks—the UAW and CAW are "negotiating" a new round of concessions. The Delphi experience leaves no doubt that bankruptcy would result in massive job losses and be used to break the UAW. It is in this atmosphere of fear that union members will be asked to vote to give up what was won through decades of struggle.

Chrysler President Tom LaSorda has threatened to shut down Canadian operations altogether if the CAW doesn't reduce labor costs by \$19 an hour. The CAW was willing to grant Chrysler the same concessions it gave to General Motors, which reduced labor costs by over \$5 an hour. CAW



All Out for MAY DAY!

EDITORIAL: 10

President Ken Lewenza charged Chrysler, Fiat and the two governments with launching "an unprecedented and outrageous series of attacks on Canadian autoworkers and their union." (www.caw.ca)

Meanwhile, lower seniority rank-and-file UAW workers are facing what may be the most difficult decision of their lives: to take \$100,000 and quit a good-paying union job or stay and take the chance they'll be laid off permanently. Those who meet the criteria for retirement—a combination of age and years of service—must

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PHOTO: GRANMA

Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez, right, welcomes Cuban President Raúl Castro to the ALBA summit April 16.

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PHOTO: J. HUMBERTO LOPEZ

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LGBT movement wins key marriage victories

By David Hoskins

The struggle for lesbian, gay, bi and trans (LGBT) equal rights under bourgeois marriage law won back-to-back victories this month with the extension of full marriage rights to same-sex couples in Vermont and Iowa. These two states joined Massachusetts and Connecticut as the only states to perform same-sex marriages.

Iowa’s Supreme Court ruled that banning same-sex marriage violates the state constitution. The April 3 ruling made Iowa the third state in the country to grant marriage rights as a result of a court ruling.

The Vermont Legislature made history four days later by becoming the first in the country to vote for same-sex marriage. Gov. Jim Douglas initially vetoed the bill, but the Legislature voted to override his veto.

The decision by Vermont’s Legislature to recognize marriage equality was a sharp repudiation of the right-wing propaganda that the LGBT community could only gain full rights through court intervention. Same-sex couples are entitled to demand court recognition of their constitutional right to marriage equality. The Vermont legislation simply demonstrates that the courts are not the only available path of pressure for the movement.

The struggle for equality has gained momentum following the decisions in Vermont and Iowa. New York Gov. David Paterson introduced legislation on April 16 that would extend marriage rights to LGBT couples in that state. The legislation faces an uphill battle in the state Senate, where anti-marriage forces are strong.

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National Office
55 W. 17 St.,
New York, NY 10011
212-627-2994;
Fax (212) 675-7869
wwp@workers.org
Atlanta
P.O. Box 424,
Atlanta, GA 30301
404-627-0185
atlanta@workers.org
Baltimore
c/o Solidarity Center
2011 N. Charles St., Bsm.
Baltimore, MD 21218
443-909-8964
baltimore@workers.org
Boston
284 Amory St.,
Boston, MA 02130
617-983-3835
Fax (617) 983-3836
boston@workers.org

Buffalo, N.Y.
367 Delaware Ave.
Buffalo, NY 14202
716-883-2534
buffalo@workers.org
Chicago
27 N. Wacker Dr. #138
Chicago, IL 60606
773-381-5839
chicago@workers.org
Cleveland
P.O. Box 5963
Cleveland, OH 44101
216-531-4004
cleveland@workers.org
Denver
denver@workers.org
Detroit
5920 Second Ave.,
Detroit, MI 48202
313-831-0750
detroit@workers.org

Durham, NC
Durham@workers.org
Houston
P.O. Box 595
Houston,
TX 77001-0595
713-861-5965
houston@workers.org
Los Angeles
111N. La Brea Ave., #408
Inglewood, CA 90301
310-677-8647
la@workers.org
Milwaukee
milwaukee@workers.org
Philadelphia
P.O. Box 23843,
Philadelphia,
PA 19143
610-931-2615
phila@workers.org

Rochester, N.Y.
585-436-6458
rochester@workers.org
San Diego, Calif.
P.O. Box 33447
San Diego,
CA 92163
619-692-0355
San Francisco
2940 16th St., #207
San Francisco,
CA 94103
415-738-4739
sf@workers.org
Tucson, Ariz.
tucson@workers.org
Washington, D.C.
P.O. Box 57300,
Washington, DC 20037
dc@workers.org

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55 West 17 Street
New York, N.Y. 10011
Phone: (212) 627-2994
Fax: (212) 675-7869
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Editor: Deirdre Griswold
Technical Editor: Lal Roohk
Managing Editors: John Catalinotto, LeiLani Dowell, Leslie Feinberg, Monica Moorehead, Gary Wilson
West Coast Editor: John Parker
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Immigration coalition unites communities against ICE raids

By Francisco Romero
Raza Press and Media Association
Los Angeles

The Southern California Immigration Coalition Conference, a coalition of several dozen organizations, successfully gathered nearly 400 people from across the region on April 11 with the objective of “building unity between different sectors of the community to unite around this struggle—from elected officials, to students, to workers, to professionals, to leaders from the LGBT community, to teachers and parents, to community leaders, to union leaders, to intellectuals and to many more.”

The historic event began with a standing-room-only press conference inside the Santee Education Complex, a south-central Los Angeles high school which hosted the event.

The conference itself consisted of several keynote addresses in the morning by local legislators and a solidarity statement by the United Teachers of Los Angeles.

Then a working breakout session consisting of nine different workshops took place. Each workshop was facilitated with the intent of having panelists address or discuss how to organize against the repression unfolding against undocumented workers across the states. The issues ranged from “Strategies and Tactics on Stopping ICE Raids,” “Parent and Teacher Participation in the Struggle for Reform,” “Labor and Immigrant Rights,” and “The Role of Media” to “Students/Youth Involvement.”

ICE stands for Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Often called La Migra, it is the U.S. agency responsible for the raids on immigrant workers and their families.

In the “Fair and Humane Immigration Reform” workshop, panelists and participants agreed to begin the process of



PHOTO: J. HUMBERTO LOPEZ

Dozens of grassroots organizations participated.

developing a working group to draft a more progressive counterproposal than those that are currently being introduced in Congress. It was clear that the current proposals all contain components that would further militarize the U.S./Mexico border and call for the recruitment of more ICE agents to be trained and deployed across the states to terrorize migrant communities.

Ron Gochez of the Association of Raza Educators, one of the emcees for the event, stated, “We met our main goal of uniting a broad sector of our community under our three principles, which call for full legalization, and end to the ICE raids, and a NO to guest worker programs.”

It was clear during the event that students, workers, activists and organizers from various cities across southern California were present and participating in the dialogue and discussion, developing a vision beyond marching and protesting, but rather building organization

in our communities to resist and provide an alternative to the politics of fear and oppression.

“An important aspect defining the success of this conference was the presence of dozens of grassroots, independent organizations formed by workers and communities to resist ICE raids, as well as the participation of the Alianza Latinoamericana de los Derechos del Inmigrante of San Francisco,” stated Daniel Montes, a local south-central Los Angeles member of Unión del Barrio. “The ALDI community-based struggle led to the passing of a city ordinance allowing the issuing of municipal identification cards to all residents, including immigrants, so as to recognize and address the needs of marginalized groups in our communities.”

At the end of the conference, all the facilitators from the 10 workshops reported back to the general assembly about what was discussed in each space. Concrete proposals for a plan of action beyond the May

1st March were agreed upon. “The ability for communities to independently challenge the corporate/capitalist-dominated propaganda machine, where our communities are constantly being scapegoated, was a sharp example of self-determination; that is, our community deciding for itself the course of struggle via mobilizations, community-based media, and organization was central to this conference,” stated Francisco Romero, a Raza Press and Media Association correspondent who participated in the reporting on the event, as well as presenting on a panel.

According to conference organizers, the focus of the event was to develop a movement-building plan of action for mobilization and organization beyond southern California. This network would be centered around the three basic principles of unity and work toward continuing to resist and organize against the Democrat and Republican-endorsed Migra-terror in our communities. □

Will Bush gang be prosecuted for torture?

By John Catalinotto

President Barack Obama’s order in mid-April to release four Justice Department memos, kept secret until now, has exposed sharp differences within ruling circles regarding the policies of the Bush administration.

Written in the early years of that administration, the memos provided a legal argument justifying the use of harsh interrogation techniques—that is, they provided a legal cover for torture.

For example, then-Assistant Attorney General Jay ByBee—now a federal judge appointed for life—wrote his now-famous Aug. 1, 2002, memo that provided legal excuses for the techniques known as attention grasp, walling, facial hold, facial slap or insult slap, cramped confinement, wall standing, stress positions, sleep deprivation, insects placed in a confinement box and the water board or simulated drowning.

In cold and calculating language, the memos pre-approved these techniques, as long as medical personnel monitored them “properly”—that is, as long as doctors and psychiatrists participated in the crime. As ByBee wrote, “We further conclude that certain acts may be cruel, inhuman, or degrading, but still not produce pain and suffering of the requisite intensity to fall within Section 2340A’s proscription against torture.”

The memos suggested water boarding be limited to 12-minute sessions to avoid charges of torture. This didn’t stop the CIA interrogators from applying that technique a total of 266 times on two of their prisoners. (New York Times, April 20)

CIA officials and Republican politicians have attacked Obama from the right, charging him with compromising national security, even though George W. Bush had already revealed most if not all of what is in the memos.

No prosecutions?

Defending Obama’s decision to release the documents, Obama aide Rahm Emanuel reiterated on April 19, while speaking on several Sunday morning talk shows, that the administration would not try to prosecute either the CIA operatives who carried out the interrogations, the lawyers who justified them or the high Bush officials who ordered them.

Obama on April 21 altered that somewhat by saying that the attorney general could still decide if it was legally necessary to investigate the role of the lawyers who wrote these memos, although he preferred not to look back at these events.

Manfred Nowak, the United Nations rapporteur on torture, said that the U.S. must try those who used harsh interrogation tactics, according to the U.N. Convention Against Torture.

The American Civil Liberties Union—

which was on the verge of winning a suit forcing the government to reveal the memos—and other human-rights groups applauded the Obama administration for publishing the memos. But at the same time they criticized the government for failing to charge the top government officials who ordered the torture techniques with crimes and bring them to trial.

The Center for Constitutional Rights said on April 16, “It is one of the deepest disappointments of this [Obama] administration that it appears unwilling to uphold the law where crimes have been committed by former officials. Whether or not CIA operatives who conducted water boarding are guaranteed immunity, it is the high level officials who conceived, justified and ordered the torture program who bear the most responsibility for breaking domestic and international law, and it is they who must be prosecuted.” (www.ccrjustice.org)

The Obama administration had earlier promised to end CIA torture at Guantánamo. Regarding the hundreds of tortured detainees who have been transferred to other countries, however, the CIA has refused to allow the International Red Cross access to them. (Newsweek, April 8)

Tactical differences

The Iraqi resistance to a U.S. takeover has brought U.S. imperialism’s prestige to its lowest level. An April 18 New York Times editorial indicates sharp differenc-

es within U.S. ruling circles over how to restore U.S. standing, but not over whether U.S. world domination itself is a crime.

The Times, speaking for a sector of the imperialist ruling class, clearly differed with Obama’s argument, as put forward by Rahm Emanuel, that “this is not a time for retribution.” Its editorial called for an investigation of Justice Department memo-drafting lawyers ByBee, John Yoo and Steven Bradbury.

This editorial also suggested that if the Justice Department doesn’t do it, then Congress should investigate the executive branch, including Bush’s vice president, Dick Cheney; former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld; and former Attorney General Alberto Gonzales.

Many others worldwide know that U.S. use of torture, as serious as this is, was only one part of the Bush administration’s criminal conspiracy to carry out the illegal and unjustifiable invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq—invasions the New York Times also supported at the time. These criminal adventures resulted in the deaths of over a million Iraqis, tens of thousands of Afghans and thousands of U.S. troops.

There would be widespread support here and worldwide for prosecuting Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and company for their many war crimes, including the torture of prisoners.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

As clock ticks for Troy Davis

Efforts double to stop execution

By Dianne Mathiowetz
Atlanta

“Innocence matters.” These two words express the mantra of the international movement to stop the execution of Troy Anthony Davis. Davis’s conviction in the killing of off-duty Savannah policeman Mark McPhail in August 1989 is solely based on tainted eye-witness testimony. Davis has consistently and repeatedly asserted his innocence.

Seven of the nine witnesses who formed the prosecution’s case have now recanted or altered their testimony. Others have come forward to identify another man as the shooter. Many of the witness statements cite police intimidation or threats as the cause of their false testimony.

Yet on April 16, a three-judge panel of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, in a two-to-one decision, denied a second habeas



corpus appeal that would have allowed for a full court hearing on the new evidence.

The majority opinion of Judges Joel Dubina and Stanley Marcus devoted pages to technicalities which “constrained” them from allowing a new trial. They dismissed the validity of the recantations, stating that the witnesses’ affidavits did not present clear and convincing evidence that a jury would not have found Davis guilty. The judges’ ruling declares that Davis’s lawyers did not claim his innocence in a timely fashion.

In a sharply worded dissent, Judge Rosemary Barkett refutes “the concept of punishing an innocent defendant with the death penalty simply because he did not file his papers as early as he should have.” She goes on to argue that “executing an innocent person would be an atrocious violation of our constitution” and finds

the cumulative weight of the recantations, along with the new witness statements, a sufficient claim of innocence.

Davis’s case has come to exemplify the racist and arbitrary character of the death penalty in the United States. Police and prosecutorial misconduct in the pursuit of convictions of Black defendants accused of killing white victims, much less policemen, has been thoroughly documented. Georgia, like many other Southern states, has a long and bloody history of extra-legal lynching and racially biased verdicts, stretching from the period of slavery through Jim Crow segregation to today.

Over the last two years, Troy Davis has three times come within days and hours of execution by lethal injection. Each time, people mobilized to express their opposition with hundreds of thousands of petitions to Georgia officials and letters and op-ed newspaper articles written by such disparate public figures as for-

mer Republican Congress member and current Libertarian columnist Bob Barr, former-President Jimmy Carter and Pope Benedict II.

Numerous marches and rallies have featured Martina Correia, Davis’s sister, who has traveled the globe to expose the injustices in her brother’s case and to strengthen the anti-death penalty movement.

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals decision includes a 30-day stay of execution to allow Davis’s lawyers to petition the U.S. Supreme Court for remedial action.

Death penalty activists have set Tuesday, May 19, as a Global Day of Action for Troy Davis. Plans are being formulated in cities across the country and around the world to win justice for him. His supporters are urged to continue contacting Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue and the Georgia Pardons and Parole Board. For more information, go to www.amnestyusa.org/troydavis or e-mail troy@aiusa.org □

Mumia Abu-Jamal’s birthday April 24

Celebrate & build resistance

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal will be 55 on April 24. His family, friends and supporters are observing the day with a worldwide “Honk for Mumia” and other displays of resistance to demand freedom for this world-famous African-American journalist held on Pennsylvania’s death row.

International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal is calling on people everywhere to pick a public site in their area to go to at noon or after work with signs and banners saying “Honk for Mumia” to get the word out that the struggle for justice continues after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear his appeal for a new trial.

The week leading up to April 24 is being organized as a Revolutionary Week,

around the theme: “We who believe in freedom cannot wait—we educate!” Programs will be held every night featuring information on political prisoners.

In Philadelphia members of the original Black Panther Party will speak on April 20; Robert Hillary King of the Angola 3 will speak on April 22; and former political prisoner Adolfo Matos will be a keynote speaker at the National Boricua Human Rights Network on April 25.

The focus of the week is a celebration of jailhouse lawyers on April 24, with the official release of Mumia’s new book, “Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners v. the U.S.A.,” published by City Lights. This “more than a book party” event at the Church of the Advocate in North Philadelphia will be held simulta-



neously with other, similar events around the U.S.

In Philadelphia, speakers will include Pam Africa of the International Concerned Family and Friends; Paul Wright, editor of Prison Legal News; Amin, formerly “Harold Wilson,” the 122nd person freed from death row in the U.S.; Minister of Communication Ramona Africa for the MOVE organization; NAACP Executive Vice President Steven Hawkins; and more. There will also be a program in New York City’s Riverside Church on April 25 celebrating Mumia’s book, organized by the New York Free Mumia Coalition and others.

An important international petition campaign has been launched directed to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder demanding that he immediately initiate a civil rights investigation addressing the 27-year history of prosecutorial and judicial violations of Abu-Jamal’s constitutional and international rights. Go to www.iacenter.org/mumiapetition.

In the aftermath of the Supreme Court decision, ABC’s “Inside Story” engaged in a Mumia bashing session on April 12. Not one person on the program offered a differing opinion. One viewer described it as a “hit and run” on Mumia.

Challenged by Pam Africa to allow an alternative view to be aired, the editor and producer of “Inside Story” responded, “It’s not a news program. They’re a private studio and it’s an opinion program where people can express their opinions.” Africa responded, “When you’re expressing opinions that could result in a man being killed, it’s only responsible to allow those with evidence of his innocence equal air time.” □

Int’l Justice Campaign for Mumia launched

Following are excerpts from an e-mail campaign launched on April 15 by the New York Free Mumia Coalition, International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, Millions for Mumia and the International Action Center. To date hundreds of thousands of emails have been sent to U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, President Barack Obama, congressional leaders, and the media to demand that the Justice Department initiate a civil rights investigation addressing a 27-year history of prosecutorial and judicial violations of Mumia’s constitutional rights. Sign the email petition at www.iacenter.org/mumiapetition.

On April 6 the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear Mumia’s appeal for a new trial based on evidence of racist jury selection on the part of the prosecutor during the original 1982 trial in Philadelphia. This appeal was based on the 1986 Batson decision, a U.S. Supreme Court decision that says prospective jurors cannot be selected based on their race.

According to Amnesty International’s detailed review of the case, Mumia was

denied at his trial in 1982 the right to a fair judge and unbiased jury, the right to represent himself, and the right to adequate resources to prepare his defense. In addition, the prosecution withheld critical evidence from the defense, judge and jury; suborned the perjury of its chief witness; and intimidated at least one other witness to perjure herself. Since the AI report, more evidence has emerged of an ongoing conspiracy by the prosecution and members of the judiciary to keep out of the legal record evidence that points to Mumia’s innocence. At the very least, this evidence indicates serious misconduct on the part of the prosecution and judiciary. It was precisely this kind of misconduct that led Sen. Ted Stevens’ conviction to be overturned just two weeks ago.

The Third Circuit Court of Appeals’ rejection of Mumia’s appeal on the basis of the Batson decision shocked many legal observers, as the court set new and higher standards of appeal in complete violation of its own precedents. One of the members of the three-judge panel that arrived at this decision wrote a scathing 41-page dissent, pointing to how Mumia was not granted

the same rights that previous appellants were given by this very same court.

Only a powerful, international campaign can win long-overdue freedom for this outspoken, award-winning journalist and stop a 27-year-old conspiracy to silence him with legal lynching or life in prison without parole. Both options are outrageous violations of Mumia’s human and constitutional rights, and we will not allow them to stand. Mumia needs our movement and our movement needs Mumia.

The petition text follows:

“I write to you with a sense of grave concern and outrage about the U.S. Supreme Court’s denial of a hearing to Mumia Abu-Jamal on the issue of racial bias in jury selection, that is, the ‘Batson issue.’ Inasmuch as there is no other court to which Abu-Jamal can appeal for justice, I turn to you for remedy of a 27-year history of gross violations of U.S. constitutional law and international standards of justice as documented by Amnesty International and many other legal groups around the world.

“I call on you and the Justice Department

to immediately commence a civil rights investigation to examine the many examples of egregious and racist prosecutorial and judicial misconduct dating back to the original trial in 1982 and continuing through to the current inaction of the U.S. Supreme Court. The statute of limitations should not be a factor in this case as there is very strong evidence of an ongoing conspiracy to deny Abu-Jamal his constitutional rights.

“I am aware of the many differences that exist between the case of former Senator Ted Stevens and Mumia Abu-Jamal. Still, I note with great interest the actions you have taken with regard to Senator Stevens’ conviction to assure that he not be denied his constitutional rights. You were specifically outraged by the fact that the prosecution withheld information critical to the defense’s argument for acquittal, a violation clearly committed by the prosecution in Abu-Jamal’s case. Mumia Abu-Jamal, though not a U.S. senator of great wealth and power, is a Black man revered around the world for his courage, clarity, and commitment and deserves no less than Senator Stevens.” □

Protest says police killed dozens of unarmed Black men

By Betsey Piette
Philadelphia

Over 50 protesters braved stormy weather and a reign of terror on April 20 to gather outside the headquarters of the Fraternal Order of Police and take a stand against police brutality in the Black community. Rally organizers charged that in the Philadelphia area 36 unarmed Black men were killed by police between May 2008 and April 2009.

Initiated by the African American Freedom and Reconstruction League, the demonstrations denounced the bigotry, bias and racist murders that have been committed by the Philadelphia Police Department.

Leon Williams, speaking on behalf of AAFRL, said, “We have a situation where none of us are safe in Philadelphia. We need accountability. Mayor [Michael] Nutter is not doing anything. Police Commissioner [Charles] Ramsey is not doing anything. The police Internal Affairs are not doing anything. The only way things will change is when citizens stand up and be vigilant. Let’s get rid of the corrupt, abusive police and do it now.”

Several speakers denounced the FOP’s attack on Craig Washington, an African-American municipal judge who in February asked police to remove photos and flowers left in memory of a slain police officer from his courtroom in the 35th District police headquarters, which serves as an official courtroom for preliminary hearings. When the police officers denied his request to remove the items, Washington turned a picture over on his own “to avoid any appearance of bias in this courtroom.”

The FOP sought Washington’s transfer and is now conducting a campaign to vote him out of office in November. Referring to a large banner reading “Dump Judge Craig Washington” that adorned the outside of the FOP building, AAFRL spokesperson Brother Robert denounced this campaign. “The FOP is a disgrace to have the audacity to try to trash a judge for being principled,” he said. “But what do you expect from an organization which has all kinds of corrupt police, white and Black?”

“Internal Affairs is like the fox guarding the hen house,” he continued. “They need to be investigated. The FOP is racist to the core. Let a police officer in Philadelphia stub his toe and the city comes to a standstill. They allow drugs and guns to flow freely into our communities. They do nothing about it.” Brother Robert continued, “The police have been given license to kill.”



Protesters say police have been given 'license to kill.'

WW PHOTO: JOE PIETTE

“The FOP is organized crime,” Pam Africa of International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal told the gathering. “They have organized media. They have organized courts. These are our children they are beating down, our children they are killing.

“Our children can’t stand on the corner because the police allow drugs in our neighborhoods. They know who brings drugs in and they protect them,” said Africa.

Shahrazad Ali, mother of an 8-year-old and an adult son, described her constant concern that her sons could be shot or locked up. “Mayor Nutter has given police the political right to come up against us,” Ali

said, referring to Nutter’s “stop and frisk” policy, which gives police license to stop anyone on the streets at anytime. The program is allegedly designed to stem the number of murders in the city.

“Black people don’t make the guns and bullets,” Ali noted. “They come from outside our community.”

Police brutality victim Abdul Jon described being beaten by police inside City Hall with a baseball bat in 1981. He spent five days in the hospital and five months in jail before going to court, where a judge described the beating as “insignificant.” Jon said, “We’re suffering under a state of police tyranny. They’re about terrorizing us. It’s not just an issue of brutality.” □

replied, “Get the f**k back in your car before I give you a bunch of tickets.” Williams identified himself, asked to speak with the officer’s supervisor, and was subsequently handcuffed. Both officers involved in the incident, members of the Narcotics Strike Force, had been named in earlier cases of police brutality and excessive use of force.

The calls for an investigation have been sparked by other allegations of racism by officers, including a report by a Temple University student who allegedly heard one officer refer to residents in his North Philadelphia precinct as “animals.”

Speakers at the rally talked about Williams’ arrest, and noted that not even Black politicians or Black police are safe.

Legislative Black Caucus calls for investigation

A growing number of community leaders, including state legislators, are calling for an investigation to address allegations of police misconduct and abuse. The Pennsylvania Legislative Black Caucus joined this call in the aftermath of an incident involving State Rep. Jewell Williams.

Williams, who is Black, was driving in his North Philadelphia neighborhood on March 28 when he observed two police officers frisking an elderly Black man. He started to intervene out of concern over how the officers were treating the man. When Williams got out of his car to ask if everything was okay, the police officer

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire
Detroit

Robert Mitchell, 16, affectionately known as “Tazzy” by his family and friends, has become one of the latest victims of tasing by law enforcement.

Mitchell, who had no criminal record, was riding in a car that was stopped by Warren police on April 10. Warren is a suburb of Detroit. He was riding with an older relative after they had repaired a tire for his aunt at a neighborhood gas station.

They then offered a ride to a young woman who had missed her bus to get to work.

After pulling their car over, the police ordered the vehicle’s passengers to lie on the ground while the vehicle was searched.

According to eyewitnesses, Mitchell ran from the scene and was chased by police into the city of Detroit, where he took refuge in an abandoned home on Pelkey Street on the East Side. Police officers pursued him and brought him out of the house.

The police then took Mitchell back into the same house and tased him. He passed out and later died. One of the passengers in the vehicle in which Mitchell had been riding said police told her that the youth “fainted.”

Family demands justice

Robert Mitchell’s family is not satisfied with the explanation provided by the Warren Police Department. The family, along with the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, held a candlelight vigil in honor of Mitchell’s memory on April 12. The event was covered widely by Detroit’s local television and print media.

Later that week, family members and supporters from DCAPB attended a Warren City Council meeting and demanded the termination of the Warren police officers involved in Mitchell’s death. They also demanded that the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office file

charges against the cops who had crossed over into Detroit, where Mitchell died.

A memorial service was held for Mitchell on April 18 at Second Ebenezer Church on the city’s East Side. Hundreds of Mitchell’s family members and friends attended the service and expressed their grief over the incident. The family pledged to continue the fight to have the officers fired and prosecuted.

“He was the storyteller of the family,” said Ramell Savage, 14, one of Mitchell’s three brothers. Family members described Mitchell as a normal teen who loved sports and music.

Ron Scott, spokesperson for DCAPB, said, “Tasers are not nonlethal weapons. They kill. This is why the DCAPB mounted a successful campaign several years ago to ban the use of Tasers by the police in the city of Detroit. However, suburban police departments are using this weapon and there have been two deaths recently after this weapon was utilized.”

Warren Mayor Jim Fouts questioned whether the police should continue to use Tasers, which stun a person with a jolt of electricity. He called for an independent investigation into whether the weapons are safe.

“You can’t overlook the tragic death of a human being,” Fouts told the Detroit Free Press (April 15). Mitchell is the second teenager in a month to die in Michigan after being tased. A 15-year-old Bay City youth also died on March 22. □

MARXISM, REPARATIONS & the Black Freedom Struggle

An anthology of writings from Workers World newspaper. Edited by Monica Moorehead. Includes:

Racism, national oppression and self-determination by Larry Holmes

Black labor from chattel slavery to wage slavery by Mumia Abu-Jamal

Causes of turmoil in Jamaica by Pat Chin

Black youth: repression & resistance by Leilani Dowell

Black & Brown unity: A pillar of struggle for human rights & global justice! by Saladin Muhammad

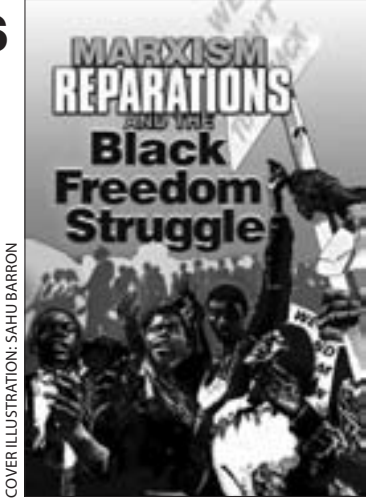
Are conditions ripe again today? 40th anniversary of the 1965 Watts Rebellion by John Parker

Racism and poverty in the Delta by Larry Hales

Domestic Workers United demand passage of a bill of rights by Imani Henry

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Bosses, gov't behind auto crisis

Continued from page 1

weigh whether to retire and risk losing their pension or keep working and risk losing their job. They have until April 27 to decide!

The situation is hardly more hopeful for UAW members at GM. The new CEO, Fritz Henderson, has stated: "I felt several weeks ago that it would be more probable that we would need to go through a bankruptcy process. That continues today. But I wouldn't be able to hazard a guess as to what the probabilities would be." (Detroit News, April 15)

With or without bankruptcy, GM plans additional job cuts on top of the 47,000 included in the initial plan submitted to Washington. GM has until June 1 to develop a more drastic restructuring—based on the most pessimistic car sales projection—and to win big union concessions and get bondholders to reduce debt.

These bondholders consist of large investors and hedge funds—often called "vulture capitalists." They likely bought GM bonds at bargain basement prices, but are crying "no fair" at suggestions that GM compensate them at the going market rate.

The still nameless "committee" of bondholders has had the nerve to suggest that the UAW members—who are being asked to give up performance bonuses, cost-of-living-allowance raises, the eight-hour day, paid holidays, income protection and more—are getting preferential treatment.

With both GM and Chrysler the lenders are stalling negotiations, forcing the unions to make concessions first. The more cost reductions they squeeze from the workers,

the less the banks and bondholders will be held accountable for.

Why are they broke?

The question no one in the capitalist media is asking is this: How did the auto companies become so mired in debt to begin with? In August 2007, when Wall Street equity firm Cerberus was in the process of buying Chrysler, we wrote:

"The sale of Chrysler to Wall Street private equity firm Cerberus faces new, unanticipated difficulties. Since the subprime meltdown, which has now infected the entire credit industry, investors are shying away from the bond market. 'A group of six banks acting for Cerberus Capital Management LP, the buyer of Chrysler, cancelled plans to sell \$12 billion in loans for Chrysler's auto business after failing to interest investors,' explained the July 26 Detroit News. ... 'Depending on how the agreement is structured, the firm might end up having to pay higher interest rates than originally envisioned.'

"The whole purpose of the \$12-billion loan is to finance a new level of restructuring at the workers' expense. The billions are to be used in the power-train division to build new plants that ... will build more fuel-efficient engines and transmissions with less than half the workforce previously employed."

In the midst of a credit crisis, Chrysler LLC borrowed billions, at less than ideal terms, for a restructuring that has put tens of thousands out of work. With the 2007 contract negotiations the company attempted to shift the cost burden onto the workers, through a two-tier wage

structure. When car sales collapsed, however, the new hires making \$14 an hour were laid off. Thus the company could not benefit from the regressive wage structure. The company burned through its cash reserves, finally borrowing money from the federal government to keep paying, among other obligations, cash owed to the lenders.

In the case of GM, the \$28 billion owed to bondholders stems from a massive restructuring that included the building of new, super-high-tech plants in India, China, Russia, Uzbekistan and Brazil. Like Chrysler, GM has been unable to reap the benefits of the two-tier wage. Yet the "poor" company's global expansion continues unabated. Speaking at the Shanghai Auto Show on April 19, Nick Reilly, president of GM's Asia-Pacific division, stated, "We will continue to invest in new products for China, in new facilities and the latest in technology." (Detroit News, April 20)

The "deeper" restructuring the ruling class insists on is forcing workers to pay the cost of eliminating jobs—with yet another round of layoffs!

By demanding further job cuts, the government is in violation of the Full Employment Act of 1978, under which it is mandated to take every possible measure to minimize unemployment.

Since the Bush administration made the initial loans to Chrysler and GM, the government has brazenly interfered in the collective bargaining process, in violation of the 1935 National Labor Relations Act.

The UAW leadership has issued no statement challenging the illegal attacks

on the union and its members' jobs or the blackmailing tactics of big capital. Silence is the voice of complicity.

Whose jobs? Our jobs!

From 1936 to 1937 the young UAW grew by leaps and bounds, building on the success of the sit-down strikes. Every time the union was accused of violating a company's property right, the answer would be the same: a worker has a property right to a job. The top leaders as well as the rank and file articulated this right. It was the chief legal argument in defense of the sit-downs by the union's attorneys. Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, who was under pressure to declare the occupations illegal, recognized the workers' right.

This property right concept has never been more relevant. The unemployment rate in Michigan is officially approaching 13 percent and Ohio is not far behind. For the real people behind the statistics, asserting the right to a job is the best defense against foreclosures, layoffs, school closings, lack of health care and all the ravages of capitalist overproduction.

The sit-down at the Belfast plant of Ford spinoff Visteon is now in its third week. Last week a Belgian boss at a Fiat sales office was the latest to be "boss-napped." All over the world workers are fighting for their jobs.

Marchionne could not get away with making his arrogant threats against the militant Federation of Italian Metalworkers. He shouldn't get away with it anywhere.

Whose jobs? Our jobs!

E-mail: mgrevatt@workers.org



Audit shows OSHA failed to prevent worker deaths

By Dana Gilmartin

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration was created in 1970 as a division of the U.S. Department of Labor tasked with preventing work-related injuries, illnesses and deaths by setting and enforcing standards for workplace safety and health.

Where fatalities have occurred on the job, OSHA is supposed to oversee the enforcement of its rules. However, an audit of OSHA's program for employers with fatalities, released March 31, found that those who qualified for the Enhanced Enforcement Program were almost always overlooked—97 percent of the time. ("Employers with reported fatalities were not always properly identified and inspected under OSHA's Enhanced Enforcement Program," Elliot P. Lewis, U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General—Office of Audit)

Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show an average of more than 5,680 workplace

deaths each year in the period from 2003 to 2007. This does not include deaths from work-related illnesses, like asbestosis and some cancers, which kill about 49,000 people per year, according to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

Proper application of the EEP procedures, including additional inspections and stricter settlement terms, might have corrected the detected hazards at 45 companies where 58 workplace deaths subsequently took place, according to the report.

The audit spanned the years 2003 to 2008 and covered the Atlanta, Chicago and Dallas regions of OSHA. Of the cases in the sample, 29 were designated as EEP without any of the required stepped-up enforcement actions. Twenty workers subsequently died at these 29 companies after OSHA had identified hazards.

OSHA also failed to do comprehensive or "wall-to-wall" inspections at some of these worksites, even though the companies' names appeared on lists calling

for such inspections. Had these places received comprehensive inspections after the first death, the second or third worker fatality might have been averted, noted the report.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the Enhanced Enforcement Program was adopted by federal OSHA, which has enforcement authority in just 24 states. The other 26 have state plans for the enforcement of occupational safety and health laws. Only six of these states have adopted programs similar to EEP.

Three worker deaths at the steel company Arcelor Mittal in the first four months of 2008 showed how this undermines the potential of EEP. The second occurred where there was a state plan with no program similar to EEP, so no enhanced enforcement action was taken—which might have prevented the third death.

OSHA's response to the report was to accept most of its recommendations but to dodge any responsibility for the deaths that occurred.

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney called the report's release "an indictment of the Bush administration's unwillingness to protect and safeguard" U.S. workers.

Eric Frumin, health and safety coordinator for Change to Win labor federation, said, "As the findings show, dozens of workers died at employers who were previously inspected by OSHA in dangerous and severe situations. It is outrageous that these employers neglected to prevent their workers' deaths or severe injuries at other locations."

On April 8 worker health and safety activist Jordan Barab was appointed acting head of OSHA. He will become OSHA's deputy assistant secretary once a permanent head is named. Included in Barab's strong history are his direction of the health and safety program at the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees from 1982 to 1998 and his award-winning blog about worker safety and health called Confined Space from 2003 to 2007.

It is hoped Barab can play a role not only in reinvigorating the EEP but in pushing forward many badly needed new rules, including standards for combustible dust and ergonomics, and can advocate for getting many more trained inspectors to enforce the standards.

The murders cannot go on. Safer workplaces now! □

ON THIS MAY DAY, MARCH FOR JOBS—SAFE JOBS & PRO-WORKER IMMIGRATION REFORM

In NYC, assemble at noon, Union Sq., 14th St. & B'way. Performances 4 p.m., march to 26 Fed'l Pl. 5:30 p.m.

In Los Angeles, assemble at Olympic and Broadway at 1 p.m.

In Detroit, gather at W. Vernor & Woodmere (Patton Park) 10 a.m. March to Clark Park (Vernor & Clark St.); outdoor rally noon. Contact: Latinos Unidos 313-580-5474 or 313-575-4933

Stealing New York

Why 'debt service' must be stopped

By Gavrielle Gemma

If an unemployed worker steals a loaf of bread, she or he goes to jail. Bankers who have stolen New York City, however, go home to their mansions. The banks' "legal" robbery is responsible for unemployment, poverty and the deprivation of our children. Their culpability needs to be exposed and challenged.

We hear over and over in the big-business media that the city can't meet its budget and that the Metropolitan Transit Authority has no money. The real truth is shocking.

The city's direct budget is \$59 billion a year. This enormous wealth is created by the workers, not the bankers who stuff their vaults through usury and federal bailouts. Most of the revenue comes from Jane and Joe Taxpayer, with corporations getting tax breaks and even refunds.

Who gets the \$59 billion? Twenty percent of that goes to tax-free debt service. Debt service is mostly interest paid to banks that bought municipal bonds. Twenty percent comes to \$11.8 billion a year, tax-free.

Every year the amount of debt service grows. Alan Hevesi, former New York state comptroller, said in a 2005 report that "debt is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 9.5 percent." As revenues fall because of the economic crisis, the debt service continues to grow, as does its percentage of the total budget.

Add to this the tax-free interest paid to banks through back-door borrowing (BDB). The website of the state comptroller describes BDB: "This is debt issued by public authorities (public benefit corporations) without voter approval. The State has authorized numerous authorities to issue debt which the State is contractually obligated to pay for the interest and principal. This debt is not approved by the voters but tax dollars are used to repay the debt. ... [This debt] makes up 93 percent of outstanding State funded debt ... and increased 40 percent from 2000 to 2006."



WW PHOTOS: LEILANI DOWELL

Not just corruption—it's capitalism

It's not just tax dollars from the city and state that go to the banks. Take the MTA, which is the fifth-largest debtor in the United States. Its debt service—tax-free interest paid to the banks—comes to \$1.5 billion a year, or 13 percent of the MTA's budget. In four years it will rise to \$2 billion, or 16.5 percent of its budget. That's enough to roll fares back and increase service dramatically.

Had enough? Wait. BDB was used to fund the gentrification project called Hudson Yards. It cost \$4 billion, all from borrowed money. The New York City comptroller's office admits that the interest over 40 years on that loan will be \$10 billion.

This shell game goes on and on. It seems every year a new shadow entity—like the Transitional Finance Authority—is set up. It issues bonds. The city pays it back.

There are plenty of other examples: Water and Sewer, Sports Authority, Bridge and Tunnel, etc. Feel ripped off? Wait again. There are also state interest payments. Throw in the interest on loans, mortgages or rent and your credit card—there is no law limiting interest rates on

credit cards—and much of your income goes to the banks in interest.

Can we forget the federal debt service and the recent outright giveaway to the banks of more than \$2 trillion in tax money?

Emergency measures needed

If an official issues a contract to a friend using public funds, it's considered criminal corruption. What is it called when politicians get government to take out loans from bankers who fund their campaigns? Business as usual. And the exorbitant payments to the banks for these loans go on, year after year. It doesn't matter if schools or hospitals close—the bankers must be paid. In fact, the New York City Charter says that before one glass of milk is bought for a school child, debt service must be paid.

Unemployment is skyrocketing in New York City. In some African-American communities it is 60 percent. Transit fares are going up so high many people can't afford to even look for a job. Rents are insane. If this is not a bona-fide emergency, what is?

The city should declare a state of emergency and declare a moratorium on debt

Financial sharks were target of 'Bail out the people, not the banks' march on Wall Street on April 3.

service payments to the banks. Even a partial moratorium would help. Just \$3.5 billion could create 100,000 useful jobs at \$30,000 a year with health insurance.

"Repudiation" is a legal term for acknowledging a contract or debt and refusing to pay it. In the 1840s, after the capitalist economic panics of 1837 and 1839, nine states actually repudiated part or all of their debt because of a bona-fide emergency with legitimate social conflicts. The demand for a moratorium just means putting a stop to paying interest to the banks so those billions could be used for jobs and other critical needs.

A moratorium on debt service is logical and just, as is the demand for a moratorium on foreclosures and layoffs. Yet it won't happen without a mass movement to demand it. The bankers will get hysterical between sips of their \$1,000-a-bottle wine as they fly to and from their numerous mansions. Yet such a measure would help save the lives and livelihoods of millions of people. We can do it! □

Union delegates reaffirm support for SF8

By Judy Greenspan
San Francisco

Delegates to the San Francisco Labor Council on April 13, by a vote of 45 to 40, defeated a right-wing attempt to revoke a previously passed resolution that demanded justice for the San Francisco 8.

The San Francisco 8 are a group of former Black Panther Party members, now community organizers or political prisoners, who were charged more than 35 years after the fact with killing a San Francisco policeman. Similar charges against three former Black Panther Party members, including current defendant Harold Taylor, had been dismissed in 1975 after a judge concluded they had been tortured by police in New Orleans. The statements from this torture were used to fabricate the murder charges in the current case.

The San Francisco Labor Council is well-known for its willingness to support progressive issues. Over the past several years, the Labor Council has passed resolutions supporting May Day immigrant rights protests and demonstrations against the U.S. war on Iraq. The Labor Council has also demanded a moratorium on foreclosures and evictions.

On Feb. 9, the Labor Council had passed



Four of the San Francisco 8: Francisco Torres, Hank Jones, Harold Taylor, Ray Boudreaux.

a resolution demanding that the charges be dropped against the San Francisco 8, reflecting a broad sentiment in the San Francisco Bay area.

However, as a result of heavy pressure and a public attack on the resolution by the San Francisco Police Officers Association—not a member of the Labor Council—five members of the executive committee called for the resolution to be rescinded. The resolution was also pulled from the Labor Council Web site.

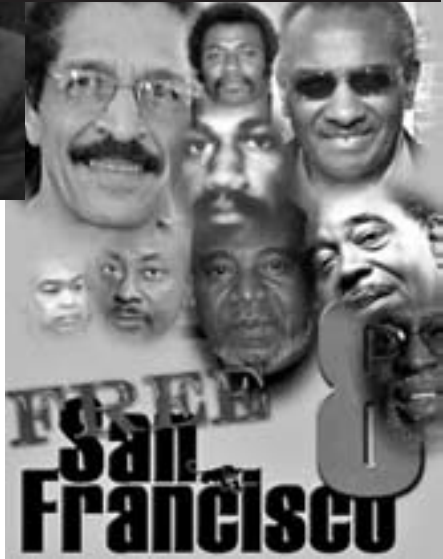
A group of progressive unionists and community supporters immediately began organizing to support the resolution and defeat the move to revoke. A statement issued by an ad hoc group of

union delegates read: "The Labor Council has a proud history of standing up for social justice in the face of controversy and intimidation. This is not the time to take a step backwards."

These trade unionists, hailing from many Bay Area locals, organized a large delegation to attend the April 13 Labor Council and fight against the motion to rescind the democratic vote.

Statements were issued by many organizations and individuals, including Fred Hirsch, a member of the executive committee of Plumbers and Fitters Local 393. Hirsch witnessed demonstrators, including children, being attacked by the San Francisco police on March 21, during the

Photos to the left are from a rally demanding the charges against San Francisco 8 be dropped. It was held in Martin Luther King Jr. Labor Center in New York in 2007. Herman Bell, Richard Brown, Jalil Muntaqim (Anthony Bottom), Richard O'Neal were not present.



WW PHOTOS: G. DUNKEL

last major mobilization against the war in Iraq. He called upon the Labor Council to be as courageous and principled as the young children were on March 21.

Fortunately, the right-wing attempt to revoke the resolution supporting the San Francisco 8 was defeated by the union delegates. □

Black delegation attends Geneva conference to fight for reparations

By Dolores Cox
Harlem, N.Y.

A citywide rally and sendoff were held here in mid-April for the December 12th Movement International Secretariat's delegation to the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The conference takes place from April 20-24 in Geneva, Switzerland.

The purpose of the conference is to review the programs of action set forth in the 2001 Durban I World Conference, which called for strong anti-racism legislation, improved education about racism, and better remedies and resources for victims of racism. It will assess the progress made by countries in combating racism and see what remains to be done to obtain justice, compensation and reconciliation.

At the citywide rally, the December 12th Movement's non-governmental organization delegation and other activist groups

reinforced their determination to continue the fight of African people for recognition of the truth and righteousness of their cause. They state they're going to Geneva to reaffirm the entitlement of the descendants of slavery to reparations, based on the 2001 U.N. Declaration that "slavery and the slave trade are a crime against humanity and should always have been so, especially the trans-Atlantic slave trade." As such, there is no statute of limitations regarding reparations.

A documentary video was shown of the "Durban 400," a group of 400 grassroots political activists, educators and students who, without any governmental support, traveled from the U.S. to Durban, South Africa, in 2001 to demand reparations for crimes committed against African people through the trans-Atlantic slave trade, slavery and colonialism. Through their lobbying efforts, the issue of reparations was placed before the international governmental body.

At the rally, the 2009 delegates expressed pride in victoriously putting reparations on the world stage in Durban and their intention to keep it on the front burner. They say they will be challenging the Obama administration's attempt to dilute or remove language from the 2001 Declaration that would reverse their victory. The U.S. has threatened to boycott this conference if reference is made to reparations for slavery or, regarding the Palestinian struggle, to equating Zionism to racism. The U.S. is also pressuring other countries to do the same. In 2001, after just 72 hours into the conference, the official U.S. delegation walked out in protest.

Activists throughout the African Diaspora are demanding to know why President Barack Obama is not supporting Durban II. They emphasized that he must be pressured to do the right thing and implement policies to repair the damages and wrongs of U.S. crimes against humanity. For without reparations, it will be impossible for descendants to ever catch up economically, politically, socially or to achieve equality and justice. It was also mentioned that the review conference was supposed to have taken place five years after 2001, not eight years later.

The delegates stressed the importance of all activists becoming agents of change for the Reparations Movement, stepping up the struggle nationally and internationally, and supporting the delegation by holding forums, sending emails, writing letters, making phone calls and so on. While in Geneva, the delegation says it will be shoring up other groups of African peoples and make it known that the U.S. government doesn't speak for its people on this issue. With U.S. media coverage of

the 2001 conference notably absent, it's important that doesn't happen this year.

The delegation could only speculate about why there was a change of venue last year from Durban to Geneva. The effects of this change will most likely reduce the number of African delegations able to attend. The fact that Geneva is one of the most expensive cities in Europe will have its impact. Available funding for NGOs was also reduced this year. As a result, the cost is prohibitive for some, while others are going at their own expense.

December 12th Movement representatives reemphasized the destructive nature of capitalism for African peoples. They pointed out that both bankers and slave owners received reparations for the loss of their enslaved African labor. Additionally, Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, was forced to pay reparations to their former French colonizers for their freedom from slavery. The activists reiterated that colonialism and slavery were criminal enterprises of the oppressive U.S. capitalist economic system from which so many profited from the suffering of others.

The rally reinforced that U.S. society should take a leading role in the Durban Review conference, put reparations in its historical perspective, and take necessary actions to seek solutions to repair damages. During the rally there was a reminder of a quote from Malcolm X: "Human Rights are your God-given rights that are recognized by all the nations of this earth." The rally closed with the affirmation: "Reparations is a right. They stole us, they sold us, they owe us!"

Dolores Cox is an International Action Center organizer.

Open letter on World Conference on Racism

Following is an edited version of an open letter entitled "U.S. Refusal to Participate in Durban Review Conference: African Americans and People of Color Speak for Ourselves!" which was posted by African Americans & People of Color Support the Durban Review Conference. Go to <http://www.petitiononline.com/Durbanii/petition.html> to sign the letter.

The election of Barack Obama as U.S. president was an important development in the direction of democracy. It represented an ideological blow against the hold of racism and white supremacy on national political elections. Many Blacks and People of Color worldwide have great hopes that his election among other things represents a leadership willing to take a strong stand against racist U.S. and global policies, systems and governments.

The refusal of the Obama administration to participate in the Durban Review Conference on racism to be held in Geneva on April 20-24, 2009, without preconditions that restricts the conference from addressing the issue of Reparations and the racist and genocidal nature of Israel's oppression of Palestine, is truly a big disappointment. It not only departs from one of the important meanings of the Obama election—unifying a political majority in opposition to racism; it represents a total disregard for the collective agreement of the vast majority of the world on the issue of Reparations and is an act of complicity with violations of human rights as stated in the United Nations Charter.

Little attention has been given to the fact that in the U.S. alone, it was Black and Latin@ communities who were the targets of the unjust and discriminatory subprime loan schemes of Wall Street and the financial markets. These loans preyed upon the legitimate aspirations of millions of Black and Latin@ families for adequate housing and home ownership. Various analyses of the housing market crisis indicate that Black and Latin@ communities are disproportionately impacted and will "lose between \$164 billion and \$213 billion" as a result of predatory lending, thrusting

thousands into economic crisis, homelessness, poverty, devastation.

The International Labor Organization reports that women will also be disproportionately impacted by the economic crisis, exacerbating the historic elements of gender-based discrimination worldwide. Increases in unemployment worldwide will hit women workers the hardest. According to the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality, "women's lower employment rates, weaker control over property and resources, concentration in informal and vulnerable forms of employment with lower earnings, and less social protection, all place women in a weaker position than men to weather the crisis."

Increased racially-motivated and gender-based violence is being documented across the globe as the downturns from the economic crisis linger in developing as well as developed countries. Every continent has seen a rise in violence against women, gays, immigrants, and non-majority nationalities. "Rising inequality can result in an increase in racial bias for scapegoating or advancing xenophobic and isolationist tendencies," the reports say.

We are witnessing the speed of the U.S. government in granting trillions of dollars of the people's funds to bail out the banks and corporations which are part of the historical chain perpetuating the oppression and violation of human rights against Africans, African descendants and Peoples of Color nations and communities. Yet the U.S. refuses to address the demand for reparations by the victims of oppression, as an essential component of the equality and democracy it claims to champion inside the U.S. and internationally.

We therefore call on the Durban Review Conference to recognize the voices of African-American and People of Color delegations and coalitions from organizations and social movements throughout the U.S. in this important deliberation, to arrive at a report that frames, mandates, informs, reviews and reinforces accountability to international conventions and standards on human rights. □

Racist states walk out of Geneva meeting

By John Catalinotto

There have been two "walkouts" from the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Geneva. It is instructive to observe which countries walked out.

The first walkout, led by the United States, was of those countries boycotting the entire conference. These included the U.S., Canada, Israel, New Zealand and Australia—the major settler states that through genocide displaced Indigenous populations from their territory. The Netherlands, the plunderer of Indonesia, and Germany and Italy, which waged murderous wars against barely armed African populations, joined them, as did Poland, now itself a semi-colony.

A few of the largest historical despoilers and plunderers of the colonized world held back from this first walkout. France and Britain, for example, which had divided up most of Africa, the Middle East and large parts of south and east Asia, opted to participate in the conference. This gave

them the opportunity to disrupt from inside—which they did a few days into the meetings.

On April 21, when President Ahmadinejad of Iran spoke denouncing the racist actions of the Israeli state against Palestinians, most of the U.N. delegates applauded the speech. It had been only three months since the 22-day-long Israeli slaughter of Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

However, Britain, France and the rest of the European Union countries present walked out, accusing Ahmadinejad of racism.

Their actions spoke louder than any words of phony concern. There has to be a vigorous struggle against racism precisely because the imperialist powers and their settler states—which for historical reasons are mostly white—have promoted racism against peoples of color and all Indigenous peoples throughout the world in order to better exploit them. The ones who wound up walking out of the conference on racism are exactly those most guilty of racism. And everyone who remained knows it.

E-mail: jcat@workers.org

Celebrate Mumia's birthday & new book: "Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners vs. the U.S.A."
In Philadelphia, Fri., April 24, More Than A Book Release! **A Celebration of "Jailhouse Lawyers"**
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Somalis harassed in U.S. as

Pentagon plans escalation in Horn of Africa

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

In the aftermath of the April 12 sniper killings of three Somali teenagers by the U.S. Navy, several U.S. agencies met on April 17 to conduct a review of military and foreign policy toward this Horn of Africa nation. The State Department, Pentagon and Justice Department have outlined a series of options to ostensibly fight “piracy” in the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

Somalia is in a desperate condition after decades of intervention by the U.S. and European imperialists. One of the reasons Somali fishermen have turned to seizing ships is that tons of toxic and radioactive wastes from Europe have been dumped off their shores in recent years, killing off the fish they relied on for a living and sickening the villagers along the coast.

It was announced on April 17 that the U.S. would fund the security forces of the new Somalia government established in February. Acting Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Phillip Carter stated that the Barack Obama administration was going to focus on long-term “security” issues in Somalia and at the same time end piracy off the shores of the country.

During the highly publicized seizure of the captain of a U.S.-flagged, Danish-owned cargo vessel, the Maersk Alabama, the U.S. sent three warships into the Indian Ocean. Plans are underway to escalate foreign naval presence in the region in order to provide escorts for ships traveling the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean.

Other options being considered include placing military personnel on individual ships and imposing a blockade on Somali towns that the U.S. claims are bases for piracy operations. In addition, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called for seizing the assets of those designated as pirates operating off the coast of Somalia.

“These pirates are criminals. They are armed gangs on the sea. And those plotting attacks must be stopped,” Clinton said in Washington. She also called for “going after” bases where pirates are operating and developing methods “to explore ways to track and freeze” money paid as ransom to pirates. (AP, April 16)

It was also reported that “the United States is a major contributor to an international anti-piracy patrol called Task Force 151. The task force is part of a contingent of some two dozen warships from a number of countries, including the European Union, China and Russia, that patrol the area.” (AP, April 18)

The article mentioned above on the U.S. military presence in the region also says, “Helicopters and airplanes were at the ready during the Maersk Alabama standoff, and the Navy has been gathering information about the pirates through P-3 patrol aircraft and unmanned drones.”

Other tactics are being considered by the Pentagon. “Increased use of drones and other surveillance tools is one option. Another air option is using airborne assaults on pirate vessels and on-land lairs. Submarines might also be used to collect information about pirate movements.”

Some Pentagon officials want also to engage in land operations against people targeted as pirates. A combination of both attacks on land and the tracking of people in the waters would require coordination between the U.S. Army, Marines and Navy.

French commandos have carried out a number of raids against pirates who have taken control of vessels in the region. In



time-defense analyst for the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London, says, “Terrorists, tourists, fishermen, pirates, they all look the same until the last moment.” (Inside Somalia, April 18)

In regard to the legal status of Somalis captured and charged with piracy, the U.S. has said it will prosecute a Somali teenager captured during the standoff involving the Maersk Alabama. The French government, which says it has captured 11 Somalis involved in piracy, is currently interrogating them in Paris jails.

In response to the increased attention on the situation in the waters off the coast of Somalia, the U.S., Britain and the EU have all signed agreements to allow for piracy suspects to be turned over to Kenya for trial. Kenya is part of the Commonwealth of Britain and its former colonies.

Linking the Suez Canal and the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden is a shipping lane provid-

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Afghan women protest new law

By Kathy Durkin

Hundreds of angry Afghan women demonstrated in Kabul on April 15. Led by young activists, they marched to Parliament to demand the repeal of a new law denying women basic rights.

The Shia Family Law, passed by Parliament and signed by President Hamid Karzai, restricts women’s rights by, among other things, condoning marital rape; limiting travel outside the home for work, school or medical care without a husband’s permission; and denying inheritance and child custody.

An avalanche of worldwide criticism has been leveled at Karzai because of this legislation. Though he is now publicly hedging on the new law, he wants to win the upcoming presidential election and is courting the support of conservatives, in and out of Parliament, who oppose women’s rights.

An immediate question arises: How has 30 years of U.S. intervention affected Afghan women’s rights?

In 1979 the U.S. began to destabilize the government of the Progressive Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which implemented

laws promoting women’s rights. Women had made some gains under the progressive government. But the U.S. and its allies made a bloc with reactionary forces to overturn the pro-women’s rights government and curtail further gains for women.

For the next 10 years the CIA poured billions of dollars into arming right-wing groups that opposed advances for women and fought to oust the government and its Soviet allies. It succeeded.

In 1996 the Taliban took over the government, backed by then-President Bill Clinton.

In October 2001, after the Sept. 11 crisis, the U.S. government lied about “protecting women’s rights” as a cover to militarily intervene in Afghanistan for its own imperialist aims. While the administration cried crocodile tears and Laura Bush deplored the “poverty, poor health and illiteracy” of Afghan women, U.S. bombs rained down on their villages, killing women and their families.

The U.S. then worked to oust the Taliban in 2001, in alliance with other forces that opposed women’s rights. In 2004 the U.S. and Britain helped to install Karzai as president. He allegedly promot-

ed women’s equality, but his government has not helped women at all.

Since 2001 the U.S./NATO bombing, invasion and occupation of Afghanistan have killed and injured thousands of civilians, including women. In 2008 alone, airstrikes escalated and 2,118 civilians were killed.

The eight-year war has impoverished women and forced many out of their homes. Afghan women’s life expectancy is only 44. The maternal mortality rate is the second highest in the world: 24,000 women die annually—over 65 each day!—due to pregnancy or childbirth. Women’s illiteracy rate is 85 percent, the highest in the world. One million widows are forced to beg or turn to prostitution to survive and feed their families; many commit suicide.

In war zones, conditions are even worse: “Women are disproportionately affected due to death and injuries caused by U.S. and NATO troops. Many women have been thrust into poverty with little support after losing a home and a family breadwinner in an air strike.” (feministing.com)

Under the U.S. occupation, and with a government installed by the U.S. and its allies, women’s social and political rights

have not improved.

Afghanistan-based journalist Anand Gopal notes that while some better-off women gained rights in the cities in the last eight years, this didn’t happen in the countryside where the majority live. There many women already live under the same conditions imposed by the new law. They lack health care, autonomy and protection from abuse. Forced marriages predominate, including of young girls. Domestic violence and marital rape are common. Countrywide, only 5 percent of girls attend secondary schools. (Huffington Post, April 13)

Gopal says that “foreign intervention” has hurt women, as the U.S. and NATO support reactionary elements—who are now in Parliament—against pro-women’s rights forces. He says it’s “no surprise” that anti-woman laws are being passed.

With the U.S./NATO occupation, the U.S. military spends \$100 million a day in Afghanistan for war, where thousands are dead and injured and women are being harmed, not helped. The U.S. plans to send another 17,000 soldiers and 4,000 advisors to Afghanistan. This means even more horror for Afghan women. □



All out for May Day!

May 1 is May Day—

International Workers' Day. It began in the United States a long time ago during the struggle for the eight-hour work day, but that history is not well known here, and for good reason. The scions of capitalism who feed us their ideology don't want workers and oppressed people to know their own history of struggle.

But this year, like every year, workers around the world will take part in demonstrations, meetings and other actions to mark May Day. In Cuba and other socialist countries, May Day is a holiday that celebrates the role of workers in creating a new society.

In 2006, immigrant workers and their supporters revived the tradition of May Day in the United States by holding demonstrations and work stoppages involving millions of workers.

This year May Day will be commemorated with demonstrations in New York, Los Angeles, Detroit and other cities and towns from coast to coast. Once again, immigrant workers and their allies will mobilize to demand pro-worker immigration reform and an end to the detentions, raids and deportations that have torn apart thousands of families.

U.S.-born workers have every reason to join their immigrant sisters and brothers to make it clear to the bosses and the ruling class that "no worker is illegal." Solidarity among all workers is a necessary component to combating racism and creating the kind of unity that can turn back the growing attacks on all workers and the oppressed.

The wealth created by the working class is being sucked into the bottomless pit of capitalist greed at an ever-increas-

ing rate. Workers' tax dollars have been diverted by the trillions to bail out banks and corporations and to fund the Pentagon's continuing wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, unemployment and mass layoffs are soaring. Wages, benefits and pensions are being slashed. Budget cuts threaten what remains of social services. Health care is out of reach for tens of millions. Quality education is but a costly dream for many youth. Home foreclosures and evictions are devastating cities and communities while homelessness grows.

May Day is a perfect opportunity for working people of all backgrounds, ages and nationalities to come together to demand social and economic justice as well as show solidarity with immigrant workers. Whether the slogan is "A job is a right" or for a "Moratorium on foreclosures and evictions," now is the time for workers to assert their demands.

As the capitalist collapse continues its downward spiral, workers will continue to find great contradictions in a system that creates fabulous wealth for a small minority and increasing poverty and misery for the majority. Objective conditions will create the basis for a growing understanding by workers that their aims and needs are irreconcilable with those of the capitalists.

Every demand made for social and economic justice, every step forward in unity and solidarity, will hasten the day when workers as a class will be able to act in concert on their own behalf to reclaim the wealth they create and use it for the benefit of humanity, not for the profit of a wealthy few. □



A videotape shows Tomlinson, above with hands in pockets, before he was clubbed to the ground from behind by a cop.

At G20 protest

Bystander dies after police beating

By Monica Moorehead

During the anti-G20 protests in London, as tens of thousands of people took to the streets to protest a secluded meeting on the global economic crisis held by the richest capitalist countries, Ian Tomlinson, a 47-year-old newspaper seller, was walking home from work. He had to pass a gauntlet of menacing barricades and shielded police with dogs and batons.

Tomlinson never made it home on April 1. He was beaten severely by police and died that same day from internal hemorrhaging.

Tomlinson's death has made headline news worldwide because the original coroner's report said he died from a heart attack and the police initially denied having assaulted him. This report may have stood forever had it not been for an anonymous hedge fund manager from New York who videotaped the Tomlinson beating while visiting London.

The videotape prompted a demand for a second autopsy, which substantiated that he had indeed died from internal bleeding. London's Independent Police Complaints Commission, the Tomlinson family and their lawyers have enough evidence to call for an investigation into his death.

The videographer told the UK Guardian newspaper: "Judging by the short amount of time that lapsed between him being hit and pushed to the ground and him collapsing and dying, it just seemed to be coincidental that it was called a heart attack.

"Now I'm glad I came forward. It's possible Mr. Tomlinson's death would have been swept under the rug otherwise. There was nothing except some witnesses speaking to the Guardian saying they saw him being beaten. But it was their statements

versus the police. You needed something incontrovertible. In this case it was the video." (April 18)

The police officer who struck Tomlinson is "under investigation" and "on sick leave" but has not been officially charged. If charges are brought against him, reports hint that they mostly likely will be manslaughter, not murder.

More video footage, this documentation from a television crew at the same protest, showed a police officer slapping Nicola Fisher across the face and then hitting her leg with a baton. Fisher stated that while she and others were walking to an April 1 vigil for Tomlinson, the police tried to physically stop them from going further.

She stated: "Suddenly quite a few police officers came and made a line in front of us and almost straight away the officer in front of me shouted, 'Get back!' and pushed me before I even had a chance to move.

"When he did that I, as an instant reaction, pushed back, then straight away he gave me a back hander across my left cheek.

"I started shouting at him saying, 'What are you doing hitting a woman?' and pointed at my face and said, 'Do you realize there are three film crews filming you?'"

"I was just so angry and shocked that he had done it and to be honest, I really didn't think he was going to get his baton out and hit me like he did.

"It wasn't a tap, he used his full force. It was very violent and aggressive and unnecessary." (guardian.co.uk, April 18)

There were reportedly 145 complaints made by protesters of police brutality during the G20 protest, including the tactic of kettling—meaning the corralling of protesters in enclosed pens for several hours. □

MUNDO OBRERO

El Pentágono apunta hacia África

¿Por qué los somalíes secuestran barcos?

Continúa de página 12

AMISOM, las cuales están trabajando conjuntamente con las tropas leales al nuevo gobierno de la coalición en Mogadishu.

El 13 de abril, la radio Garowe divulgó que habían muerto tres personas en un período de dos días como resultado del fuego de morteros en la capital de Mogadishu. "Se sospecha que insurgentes lanzaron por lo menos diez morteros en el puerto principal de la capital Mogadishu el 11 de abril".

El informe señaló que: "Rebeldes musulmanes prometieron guerra contra el gobierno interino del país del Cuerno de África. Testigos y trabajadores del puerto principal dijeron que 'fuerzas de paz' de AMISOM cerraron los caminos cerca del puerto y entraron en vecindades próximas mientras una nave atracaba".

El informe continuó: "Había muchos soldados de AMISOM en nuestra área... arriba de edificios y no nos permitían salir de nuestros hogares, dijo un testigo. Los trabajadores portuarios dijeron que el barco había descargado materiales militares incluyendo vehículos que fueron

transportados a las bases de AMISOM en Mogadishu".

Basado en estos reportajes y en la forma en que la administración estadounidense describió la matanza de los tres somalíes, es muy importante que el movimiento contra la guerra y antiimperialista en los Estados Unidos enfatice que el aumento de la interferencia militar estadounidense en la región no creará una situación política más estable en Somalia ni en el Cuerno de África.

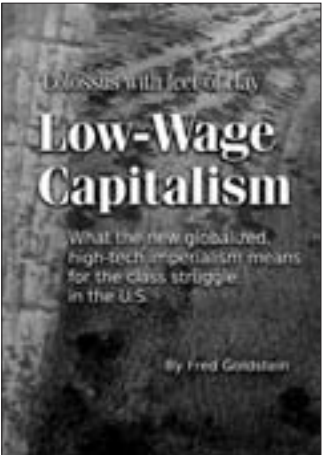
De hecho, como la historia ha mostrado, el papel del imperialismo estadounidense en el Cuerno de África ha creado más inestabilidad y subdesarrollo en la región. Como resultado de la política de la administración de Bush hacia Somalia, surgió la peor crisis humanitaria en el continente de África.

Durante el período actual, las fuerzas progresistas deben exigir el cese del militarismo EEUU y aliados en el Cuerno de África e insistir en el derecho de autodeterminación, incluyendo reparaciones, para el pueblo de Somalia y del todo el Cuerno de África. □

Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx's law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval, the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital. The analysis rests on three basic developments in the last three decades:

- The world's workforce available to exploitation by transnational capitalist corporations doubled in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and Eastern Europe.
- The technological revolutions of the digital age, in both production and communications, have allowed transnational corporations to destroy high-wage jobs and



Cuban influence strong at OAS Summit

By Julie Fry

The Obama administration has begun to roll out its strategy toward Cuba and its allies in Latin America.

On April 13, President Barack Obama announced he was lifting restrictions on travel and cash remittances to Cuba, but only for Cuban-Americans. Although touted by the administration as a major change in U.S. policy toward Cuba, worthy of some grave concession by the Cuban government in exchange, the leaders in Havana responded to the shift as a very minor, although welcome, dent in the illegal U.S. blockade of the socialist island.

The day after Obama announced this change, Cuban leader Fidel Castro, retired from his posts but still very active, published a statement in which he recounted the devastating humanitarian impact of the almost half-century-old U.S.

blockade of Cuba. Castro acknowledged that President Obama was not personally responsible for the past crimes perpetrated by the U.S. against Cuba and that, indeed, he had “waged a very hard battle in order to be elected, despite centennial prejudices.” Castro then restated the consistent position of the Cuban people, which is that “Cuba has resisted and will resist. ... It will continue advancing with its head held high.”

In fact, it was Cuba’s growing strength and influence in the region that became evident as Obama traveled to Mexico to meet with President Felipe Calderón and then later attended a summit in Trinidad-Tobago called by the Organization of American States. Calderón urged Obama to lift the blockade against Cuba, which he referred to as “useless” during their private exchange.

In fact, every nation at the OAS summit expressed its disapproval of the blockade and urged that Cuba be readmitted as a member. These open expressions of dis-



Cuba provides comprehensive early childhood education “to achieve the greatest development for a child.” –Sen. Wilbert Keon, chair Senate Subcommittee on Population Health, Canada, Feb. 3.

dain for the U.S. policy toward Cuba were further signs of Washington’s weakening influence in Latin America and the growing resurgence of the left.

Cuban President Raúl Castro spoke about the historical role of the OAS as a tool of U.S. imperialism during his remarks at an ALBA summit in Venezuela. The trade bloc of Latin American countries held its meeting just prior to the OAS summit. He explained how Cuba was kicked out of the OAS in 1962 after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, when Cuba crushed an army of CIA mercenaries that had been sent by Washington to install a puppet government there. President Castro remarked that this action by the U.S. was one of the causes of the Cuban missile crisis.

Given the history of the OAS, which President Castro referred to as an organization that “oozed blood from all parts,” Cuba expressed no pressing interest in rejoining its ranks.

However, several of the remarks made at the OAS summit were sharply critical

of the U.S. and its role in Latin America. Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez gave Obama a book—“Open Veins of Latin America” by Eduardo Galeano—that details many of the crimes of U.S. imperialism against the people of that region. In a 50-minute speech, Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega directly confronted Obama on the U.S. role in the criminal war against Nicaragua. He also demanded freedom and independence for the people of Puerto Rico. During an individual encounter with Obama, Bolivian President Evo Morales also directly accused the U.S. of plotting his assassination.

Despite the historical character of the OAS as a tool of U.S. imperialism, the U.S. president received an earful at the summit from the growing left coalition of Latin America and the Caribbean.

Obama is now being taken to task by the right-wing in the U.S. for not responding strongly enough to the sentiments expressed at the summit. He is even being attacked for shaking hands with Chávez.

Blockade is a dead-end for U.S.

Cuban leaders see these events as representative of a shift that has been taking place in Latin America and the Caribbean for some time. The U.S. policy against Cuba has been thoroughly discredited and no one is afraid to say it out loud.

Indeed, many have noted that the U.S.’s economic influence, although still tremendous and dominant, is declining in the region because of its economic crisis and the opportunities for trade and development with countries such as China. Some countries may be starting to feel less completely dependent on the U.S. and may act accordingly. The U.S. is of course aware of this.

In Cuba, Obama’s actions are being interpreted in the context of a shift in conditions that has been happening for some time and that makes the blockade virtually unsustainable.

That is not to say that Cuba no longer believes that right-wing forces within the U.S. and Latin America pose a threat. Anti-Cuba leaders were all over the mainstream media in the U.S. the week after the summit denouncing Obama for even his minor concessions. Most of the officials in the U.S. State Department dealing with Cuba worked for the Bush administration as well. Cuba has expressed no illusions about this country’s real intentions, having had 50 years of experience battling U.S. imperialism.

Although the U.S. media searched furiously for any cracks in the Cuban leadership that might signal a willingness to make some major concession to Washington, both Fidel Castro and President Raúl Castro were stalwart in their defense of the sovereignty and independence of the Cuban Revolution.

The Cuban president affirmed that any release of U.S. mercenaries now in jail would come only “if they release our five heroes imprisoned in U.S. jails.” Indeed, President Castro was clear that any negotiation with the U.S. would have to be predicated upon respect for Cuba’s sovereignty and self-determination. □

Pentagon plans escalation in Horn of Africa

Continued from page 9

ing the shortest route between Asia and Europe. It is estimated that some 20,000 ships move through that sea lane annually. The Indian Ocean is also utilized for the shipment of commercial goods and military equipment from various parts of the world.

“Lucid, deeply accurate and informative, as relevant and useful as a book can be, Goldstein offers a compelling analysis of the exploitative world of global corporate capitalism.”

– Michael Parenti, author of *Contrary Notions*

simultaneously expand the global workforce to generate a worldwide wage competition.

- The decline in the economic condition of the workers, driven by the laws of capitalism and the capitalist class, is leading to the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

Order online at www.Leftbooks.com

Somalis face increased harassment

Over the last several months, the FBI has conducted numerous investigations in the Somali community in the U.S. Reports have surfaced in the corporate press that young Somali men have left the U.S. and returned to their home country.

The Justice Department has attempted to create suspicion around these movements, despite the fact that many Somalis feel the new coalition government formed in Mogadishu may bring about political stability inside the country, which has been without an internationally recognized government since 1991.

In Minnesota, federal agents have been going to high schools, colleges and the state university and interviewing Somali nationals on the whereabouts of various young men. In response to these developments, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) is requesting that colleges provide legal assistance to students approached by the FBI.

At the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Ruqia Mohamed was approached by two FBI agents seeking information about various young men, as well as the leaders of a local mosque. Mohamed described the visits as “random and at the same time spooky.” (Minnesota

Daily, April 15)

The student said that the federal agents were “two young girls dressed casual, unlike those I see on TV.” She said they came to her home with photographs of men who are supposedly missing and mosque leaders.

“They asked me about how [one of the two missing men from the University] used to dress and the mosques he attended,” Mohamed said. “Mosques were built for prayers,” Mohamed told the FBI agents, adding that “every Muslim goes to mosques.” (Minnesota Daily, April 15)

Mohamed also reported that FBI agents showed up at her home on Inauguration Day, Jan. 20, and asked if she had information on anybody who was planning attacks on Washington. “We are Americans and we voted for Obama,” she told the federal agents. “Why would we bomb his inauguration?”

The president of the Somali Student Association (SSA), Fathi Gelle, has also been approached about the missing men as well as various activities engaged in by the organization. Deputy Chief Chuck Miner of the university’s police force confirmed that they had urged the students to cooperate with the FBI.

Gelle felt compelled to explain the character of the SSA to the police and FBI. “But

since I’m leader of the association, I felt I should educate them about SSA,” she said. The association sponsors educational, cultural and religious activities.

Gelle said that she was questioned about the missing men and whether they were members of the SSA. “I told them they were members,” she said. “Of course, they are Somalis.”

She stated that it was “wrong that the FBI is approaching the students in the campus.” She also told the Minnesota Daily that “students should not talk to them if they think they might say something that will haunt them later.”

The continuing struggle inside Somalia for stability, coupled with the seizure of commercial vessels, has prompted the U.S. and other imperialist states to step up their presence in the region. Nonetheless, the presence of these naval fleets will only further inflame tensions in the Horn of Africa and off its coast.

Anti-imperialists inside the U.S. must oppose this recent upsurge in pro-interventionist propaganda. Any effort to create peace and stability in the region must come from the Somali people themselves in conjunction with other African states throughout the region.

Read the entire article at www.workers.org.

EL PENTÁGONO APUNTA HACIA ÁFRICA

¿Por qué los somalíes secuestran barcos?

Por Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor de Pan-African News Wire

Después de que tres somalíes fueran ejecutados y otro más lesionado y capturado en el Océano Índico el 12 de abril, un líder de los llamados ‘piratas’ prometió vengar la muerte de estos jóvenes que retuvieron por cinco días al capitán estadounidense de la nave de carga Maersk Alabama.

El Capitán Richard Philips fue liberado mientras el ejército estadounidense y la prensa capitalista celebraban la muerte de los somalíes, diciendo que la acción estaba justificada.

La nave Maersk Alabama nunca fue tomada por los somalíes, aunque el capitán estuvo bajo la custodia de los piratas por cinco días. El capitán no fue maltratado durante los cinco días y la nave luego atracó en el puerto de Mombasa en Kenia, región oriental de África.

Abdi Garad, un vocero del grupo somalí que intentó tomar la nave de 17.000 toneladas Maersk Alabama, de propiedad danesa a unos 450 kilómetros de la costa, dijo a la Agencia Francesa de Prensa (AFP) el 13 de abril desde el pueblo de Eyl en la costa oriental que “Los mentirosos americanos han matado a nuestros amigos después de que ellos habían acordado liberar al rehén sin recibir ningún dinero a cambio. Pero les digo que este asunto conllevará una represalia y perseguiremos en particular a los ciudadanos americanos que viajen por nuestras aguas”.

Garad continuó diciendo, “Intensificaremos nuestros ataques hasta más lejos de las aguas somalíes y la próxima vez que detengamos a ciudadanos americanos... ellos no [deben] esperar piedad alguna de nuestra parte”. Garad dijo que después de abandonar la exigencia de un cobro por rescate, los somalíes habían pedido que el Capitán Phillips fuera transportado a un barco griego en posesión del grupo.

Jamac Habeb, un somalí de 30 años del pueblo de Eyl, declaró en la publicación Inside Somalia el 13 de abril que, “De ahora en adelante, si capturamos embarcaciones extranjeras y sus respectivos países quieren atacarnos, los mataremos. Las fuerzas estadounidenses se han convertido en nuestro enemigo número uno”.

Otro somalí, Abdulahi Lami dijo en el mismo artículo que los piratas no serán intimidados por las acciones militares estadounidenses en el Océano Índico. “Cada país será tratado de la misma forma en que nos tratan. En el futuro, América será la que llorará y esté de luto. Nosotros responderemos por la muerte de nuestros hombres”.

Según los reportes oficiales publicados por las fuerzas armadas de los Estados Unidos, francotiradores a bordo de la nave de guerra USS Bainbridge dispararon y mataron a tres somalíes después de observar sus movimientos por varios días. El plan de matar a los somalíes supuestamente fue aprobado por el presidente Barack Obama.

Los voceros de la marina estadounidense dijeron que los francotiradores dispararon contra los somalíes

cuando la vida de Phillips estaba en peligro. “Ellos estaban apuntando al capitán con rifles AK-47”, dijo el vice almirante William Gortney, quien encabeza el Comando Central de la Marina de los EEUU. El dio su declaración durante una reunión informativa del Pentágono desde Bahrein y fue reportado por Al Jazeera el 13 de abril.

Sin embargo, esta versión de los eventos ha sido disputada por los somalíes que apoyan la toma de naves. Ellos mantienen que los tres jóvenes fueron asesinados luego de haber acordado el fin de la confrontación y la liberación de Phillips. Esta operación tuvo lugar sólo dos días después de que acciones similares se llevaran a cabo por comandos militares franceses quienes irrumpieron en un yate retenido por somalíes, evento que resultó en la muerte de un rehén francés.

Mohammed Adow, un corresponsal de Al Jazeera, dijo en el mismo informe que, “se reporta que las fuerzas estadounidenses han atacado un bote salvavidas cuando los piratas estaban esperando un intercambio diplomático... [y] se llevaron al otro pirata a una de sus naves en estas aguas”.

En otro acontecimiento que hace escalar aún más las tensiones en la región, dos helicópteros militares estadounidenses sobrevolaron la ciudad portuaria de Haradhere en el noreste de Somalia el 12 de abril. La comandancia militar de Estados Unidos dice que esta área es una base de operaciones piratas contra las naves que viajan por el Golfo de Adén.

Los residentes del área pensaban que los helicópteros estaban planeando un ataque aéreo sobre el puerto. Según un periodista somalí, “Los pescadores decidieron no pescar en esa mañana debido a los helicópteros; tenían miedo”. (Inside Somalia, 13 de abril)

Detrás de la intensificación de la piratería

Durante los últimos meses los piratas somalíes han alegado que corporaciones europeas están descargando desperdicios tóxicos cerca de las costas de esta nación del Cuerno de África. Un barco ucraniano que fue detenido y luego liberado por los somalíes ganó un pago multimillonario por los dueños, pago que según reportes está siendo utilizado para limpiar los desperdicios derramados en el área.

En una declaración reportada en Al Jazeera el 11 de octubre, Januna Ali Jama, un vocero de los piratas somalíes, dijo que los pagos adquiridos de rescate sirven como medio para “reaccionar a los desperdicios tóxicos que continuamente han sido vertidos en las costas de nuestro país por casi 20 años”.

Jama, quien está basado en la región semiautónoma de Puntlandia, continuó diciendo que, “las costas de Somalia han sido destruidas, y creemos que este dinero no es nada en comparación con la devastación que hemos visto en alta mar”.

Más evidencia de las descargas de desperdicios tóxicos en el mar fue presentada por el diplomático de la ONU a Somalia, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, quien dijo a Al-

Jazeera en el mismo artículo que la organización internacional tiene “información fidedigna” de que corporaciones europeas al igual que asiáticas están descargando químicos tóxicos, incluso desperdicios nucleares, cerca de la costa de Somalia. “Tengo que enfatizar sin embargo, que ningún gobierno ha endosado este acto y que empresas privadas e individuos actuando solos son los responsables”.

Después del tsunami a finales del 2004, comenzó a aparecer evidencia confirmando esta clase de descarga ilegal en la región. El Programa Ambiental de la ONU (UNEP por las siglas en inglés) reportó que el tsunami dejó barriles viejos y oxidados en las playas de Puntlandia. Esta región anteriormente formaba parte de Somalia antes del colapso en 1991 del gobierno de Mohammad Siad Barre que estaba apoyado por los países occidentales.

Un vocero de la UNEP, Nick Nuttall, dijo a Al Jazeera en el mismo artículo que cuando los barriles oxidados se abrieron por la fuerza de las olas, las descargas ilegales que ocurrieron por muchos años fueron reveladas. “Somalia ha sido utilizada como un vertedero ilegal de desperdicios tóxicos comenzando a principios de los años 1990 y se continuó durante la guerra civil. Las compañías europeas se dieron cuenta de que era una manera muy barata de deshacerse de los desperdicios, costando nada más que \$2,50 por tonelada, cuando el costo para eliminar desperdicios en Europa es algo como \$1000 por tonelada”, dijo Nuttall.

Nuttall continuó diciendo que hay “muchas clases diferentes” de desperdicios. “Hay desperdicios de uranio radioactivo. Hay plomo, y metales pesados como cadmio y mercurio. También hay desperdicios industriales, de hospitales, desperdicios químicos—desperdicios de toda clase”.

Desde que los envases han llegado a las costas, se ha notado un aumento de varias enfermedades entre la población, incluyendo síntomas como hemorragias bucales y estomacales, infecciones de la piel y otras dolencias.

“Nosotros [la UNEP] habíamos planeado hacer una evaluación científica y rigurosa de la magnitud del problema. Pero como consecuencia del alto nivel de inseguridad tanto en tierra como en las costas somalíes, no hemos podido llevar a cabo una evaluación precisa de la extensión del problema”, siguió Nuttall.

Sin embargo, Ould-Abdallah dijo que la práctica de descargar ilegalmente los desperdicios tóxicos continúa en la región. “Lo más alarmante es que están descargando desperdicios nucleares. Los desperdicios de uranio radioactivo potencialmente están matando somalíes y destruyendo totalmente el océano”.

Mohammed Gure, presidente del Grupo Interesado por Somalia (SCG por las siglas en inglés), dijo en el mismo artículo de Al-Jazeera que el impacto social y ambiental de las descargas se va a sentir por décadas. “Las costas de Somalia antes sostuvieron cientos de miles de personas, como una fuente alimentaria y de empleos. Ahora gran parte está casi

destruida, primordialmente como resultado de las acciones de los supuestos ministros que han vendido su nación para llenar sus propios bolsillos”.

Otros factores involucrados en la explotación de Somalia son que las líneas de comercio del Golfo de Adén transportan semanalmente miles de millones de dólares en productos por la región. Casi nada de estos fondos se utiliza para el beneficio del pueblo somalí, que está sufriendo del subdesarrollo resultante de la injerencia estadounidense en sus asuntos internos.

La administración estadounidense bajo George W. Bush financió y concibió una invasión y ocupación del país por el estado aliado con el Oeste, Etiopía, en diciembre 2006. Como resultado de una resistencia feroz, el ejército etíope tuvo que retirarse del país en enero 2009. La formación de un gobierno nuevo de coalición ha fracasado en incluir en el régimen a todos los diversos grupos políticos.

Por consiguiente, tropas de Uganda y Burundi permanecen en la capital de Mogadishu, auspiciadas por la Misión de la Unión Africana a Somalia (AMISOM por las siglas en inglés). El grupo principal de la resistencia, Al-Shabab, continúa exigiendo la retirada de las fuerzas de la AMISOM antes de acordar entrar en el gobierno de coalición encabezado por el presidente Sheikh Sharif Ahmed.

El nuevo gobierno de Mogadishu, que ha sido respaldado por los Estados Unidos, aplaudió el ataque del 12 de abril contra los piratas somalíes. “Estamos muy contentos con esta acción y sus resultados”, dijo el Ministro del Exterior Mohamad Abdullahi Omaar. “No me sorprenden, y no debe sorprender a nadie, las acciones del gobierno estadounidense para rescatar a sus ciudadanos y asegurar la seguridad de su gente”, dijo Omaar a Reuters. (13 de abril)

La presencia militar de EEUU debe ser rechazada

Reportes recientes de la Casa Blanca indican que la administración de Obama está dividida sobre cómo llevar a cabo su política exterior en el Cuerno de África. Algunos elementos desean un acercamiento más diplomático al problema de la piratería y también un esfuerzo concertado de traer más países europeos y asiáticos para patrullar los mares del Golfo de Adén y el Océano Índico.

Sin embargo, otros consejeros en la Casa Blanca quieren ver una presencia militar estadounidense más directa en la tierra y en las costas de Somalia. El acontecimiento reciente de la nave Maersk Alabama provocó el envío de buques de guerra adicionales a la región del Océano Índico. (Washington Post, 12 de abril)

Según datos publicados por la Oficina Marítima Internacional, por lo menos una docena de buques de carga y más de 200 miembros del equipo están retenidos por piratas somalíes en la región. Al mismo tiempo continúa la lucha dentro de Somalia entre los combatientes de la resistencia Al-Shabab y las fuerzas de

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